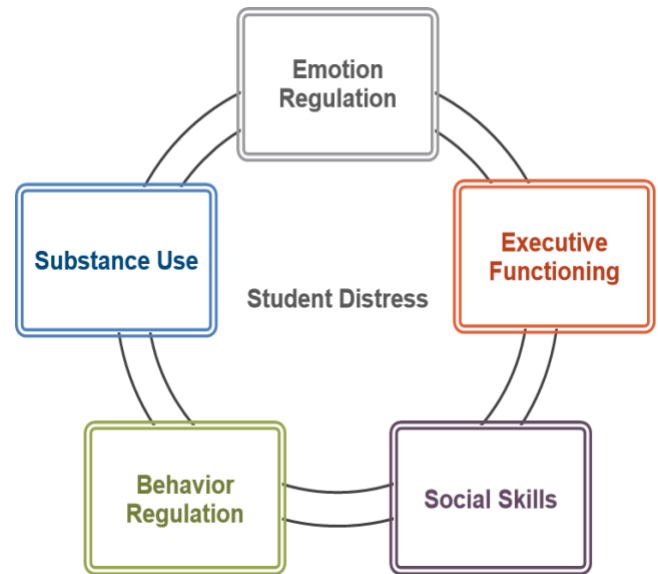




Identifying Student Distress

Educators are well-positioned to identify students in distress by being available, looking for changes in student behaviors or emotions, and using a team approach. Being available means it is important for students to know you are open to listening to them about academics as well as social, emotional, and behavioral concerns and events happening in their lives.

To identify students in distress, take the time to look for changes in behaviors or emotions. You may notice that a student who is normally well groomed appears disheveled or that a student who typically appears focused has difficulty with staying awake and paying attention. These represent changes that could signal a mental health problem.



A team approach is also important as part of identifying concerns. When teachers talk with other school team members about how students are doing and share what they have observed, the team may recognize patterns and can work to clarify a concern. Caregivers should also be part of the process and can work hand-in-hand with teachers when there is a potential concern.

The tables below detail feelings, behavior, and physical signs that may be concerning related to the areas of emotion regulation, executive functioning, social skills, behavior regulation, and substance use.

EMOTION REGULATION

Feelings	Behaviors	Physical Signs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afraid • Nervous • Angry • Irritable • Easily frustrated • Sad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cries • Clings • School refusal • Lack of eating/overeating • Sleep issues • Distractible • Loss of interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stomachaches • Headaches

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING

Behaviors: Attention

- Difficulty staying on task
- Does not complete tasks
- Forgetful of tasks and materials
- Appears disorganized
- Challenges switching from one task to another

Behaviors: Hyperactivity & Impulsivity

- Interrupts teachers and other students
- Difficulty remaining seated
- Blurts out answers
- Difficulty with self-control

SOCIAL SKILLS

Feelings

- Loneliness
- Frustration
- Sadness
- Worrying
- Misunderstood

Behaviors

- Reading social situations/cues inaccurately
- Difficulty initiating, sustaining, and/or terminating social interactions
- Difficulty recognizing how their behavior impacts others
- Difficulty negotiating conflicts or disagreements

BEHAVIOR REGULATION

Feelings

- Angry
- Irritable
- Resentful

Behaviors

- Argumentative behavior
- Lying
- Disobey instructions and rules
- Physical aggression against self, others, or property

SUBSTANCE USE

Feelings

- Unexplained mood swings
- Confused
- Anxious
- Withdrawn

Behaviors

- Sudden drop in academic performance
- Different friends
- Loss of interest in activities

Physical Signs

- Smell of substance on breath or body
- Decline in hygiene
- Dilated or constricted pupils
- Poor physical coordination

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